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The Moki Snake Dance

*A popular account of that unparalleled
dramatic pagan ceremony of the
Pueblo Indians of Tusayan,
Arizona, with incidental
mention of their life
and customs.*

BY WALTER HOUGH, PH. D.

*Sixty-four Half-tone Illustrations from
Special Photographs.*

THIRTY-SECOND THOUSAND.

Published by the Passenger Department
SANTA FE ROUTE,
1900

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The Moki Snake Dance

BY WALTER HOUGH, PH. D.

With an introduction by
Joseph Traugott


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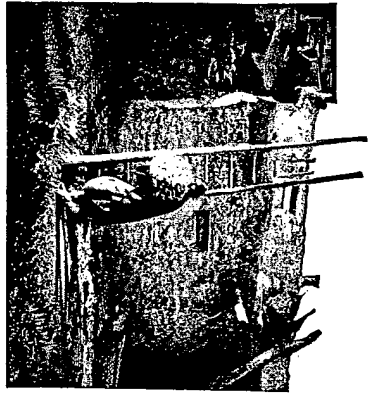
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AT THE END of the nineteenth cen-
tury, very few tourists had ever
seen the Hopi Snake Dance.
However many had heard tales of
a dramatic ritual that only occurred every
other year in isolated Indian villages in Ari-
zona. This religious ceremony that Victo-
rian society found so horrifying—and so
fascinating—soon grew into a symbolic representation
of "Indian Country" in the Southwest. The Passenger
Department of the Santa Fe Railway played upon sensa-
tionalist, tourist visions of American Indians when it
published Walter Hough's travel guide to *The Moki
Snake Dance*.

The inscription on the title page describes Hough's
text as "a popular account of that unparalleled dramatic
pagan ceremony" with "incidental mention of their life
and customs."¹ By starting with the narrative of the
Snake Dance, this report focuses on one unusual aspect
of the Hopi religion. Emphasizing this event subordi-
nates the normal, day-to-day activities of Pueblo life on
the Colorado Plateau. The concern for the unusual
creates an artificial view of Pueblo life despite the accu-
racy of the information.

The tourist industry promoted this contradictory view
of Southwestern Indians. On one hand the Hopi were



FOOD BRINGING.

Pah, photo.

the Wolpi mesa, came a band of horsemen, some clad in armor and warlike trappings badly damaged and battered by wear and tear, but impressive to the Indian, who for the first time saw the white man. Perhaps the Mokis were not very friendly. The warrior priest strode down the trail followed by his band and drew a line of sacred meal across the path to the town, over which, according to immemorial custom, no one might come with impunity. This "dead line" brought death instead to the Mokis. At the fire of the dreadful guns they fled up the narrow trail to refuge. The Spaniards dared not follow up the rocky way, but camped for the night by a spring. In the morning the timorous Mokis came down with presents of food and woven stuffs. This is the first picture of the Mokis of Wolpi, who were thus introduced to the proud Castilian, bent on reaching new lands to despoil. Later came a new company, bringing priests to turn the peaceful people from their native superstitions. When the town of Wolpi burst upon their view it was a new town, built on the highest summit of the mesa! The timid people had moved up from the lower point, taking with them house beams, stones, and every other portion of their dwellings. The trails were rendered inaccessible and the

and the Mokis has always seemed a picturesque subject. The Spaniards recorded their experiences and the Mokis relate the traditions of the experiences of their forefathers passed along by word of mouth, accurate as if written down. Beneath the town then perched on the higher slope of

people ascended and descended by a movable ladder. Still they received the priests and submitted to the enforced labor of building a church, carrying, with infinite toil, beams of cottonwood from the Little Colorado. Many of these carved beams now support the roofs of the pagan *kivas*. Later, when the oppression grew too great, the Mokis committed one of the few overt acts which may be charged against them. They threw the "long gowns," as they called the friars, over the cliffs, and cut loose once for all from the foreign religion. This ended the contact of the whites with the Mokis for long years until, at last, the Government took them under its protection.

But the Moki had immemorial enemies, as has been hinted. The Apache, who centuries ago came out of the high north, a rude and fierce being, incapable of high things, is responsible for the acropolis towns all along the trails by which the Moki clans came to Tusayan. The history of the wanderings of the Moki to this land of scant promise would be interesting if all the threads



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SNAKES, IN KIVA.